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" There is an evil, which I have seen under the sun, as an error which proceedeth from the ruler: folly is set in great dignity, and the wise sit in low place. I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth. Surely the serpent will bite without enchantment; and a babler is no better. The words of a wise man's mouth are gracious; but the lips of a fool will swallow up himself. The beginning of the words of his mouth is foolishness; and the end of his talk is mischievous madness." ECCLESIASTES: C. X. V. 5. et seq.

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TO MR. CANNING, THE PRESENT TREASURER OF THE NAVY. LETTER I.

SIR,—There having appeared, in a newspaper called the ORACLE, of the 3d instant, a publication containing a threat against all persons concerned in conducting the Press of this country, bidding "the Editors of papers in general, not only those who publish daily but those who publish weekly papers, to take notice, and receive warning, that a great change has now taken place in the system of forbearance hitherto adhered to, and declaring that a new *era* has now begun," it will, I think, be deemed perfectly natural in me to make some remarks thereon; and, as this menacing publication purports to be a speech delivered by you, in the House of Commons, on the day preceding its date, I trust, I shall stand excused for addressing these remarks more immediately to you.

In order clearly to understand the nature and the object of the above-mentioned threat, made under your name by the Editor of, or Writer in, the ORACLE, it will be necessary first briefly to state, from the several publications in that paper, the circumstances which led to the making of the threat. Mr. PETER STUART, the editor, or, rather, the proprietor, or part-proprietor, of the ORACLE, published, in his paper of the 20th ultimo, certain strictures upon the decision of the House of Commons relative to Lord Melville, of which strictures the following is a copy, the paragraphs being distinguished by numerical figures, for the purpose of facilitating the references, which it will be necessary to make to them.—"I. Sir Charles Middleton, Bart. has been appointed to succeed Lord Melville as First Lord of the Admiralty. Sir Charles being an officer of first rate talents, of great experience, and distinguished gallantry, his appointment to such an elevated situation cannot fail of affording very great satisfaction. He will be called to the House of Peers by the title of Lord Barham, of Kent. —II. While we announce this arrangement as the proper reward of public and private virtue, we cannot help sincerely

regretting, that party rancour and popular clamour have at this time deprived our King and Country of the great and powerful abilities of Lord Melville. In no period of our political history can we find such an instance of the strong effects of prejudice. With all our profound respect for the motives which influenced the majority of the House of Commons; with all our admiration of that spirit which arouses and animates the people in their expressions of indignation at the supposed malversations of an individual; with all our regard for town and county meetings when properly directed in supporting the cause of independence, freedom, and public virtue; we cannot help again and again declaring, that Lord Melville has fallen a victim to confidence misplaced, to prejudice misjudged, and to indignation misapplied. He has been condemned without a trial. When an appeal has been offered to his intemperate judges; when a request has been made to put him on his defence; when it has been earnestly solicited to give him a fair and a candid hearing, and then to come to a decision on the merits of the case; a strong and a presumptuous negative has been given, directed and enforced by the violence of the times.—III. If those who were so very impatient to deprive Mr. Pitt of so able a coadjutor, were equally zealous in their endeavours to restore to the public the unaccounted millions of which that public has been so disgracefully robbed, there would perhaps be some excuse for all that affectation of public virtue which has lately distinguished certain bawling patriots of the day. Lord Melville has not deprived the public of a single farthing. His most implacable enemies have not dared to charge him with such an act. Can as much be said of the fathers of some men? If the public were paid its pecuniary claims, long since indisputably proved, certain furious patriots, instead of living in splendour, would be put on the parish. In the future Resolutions of the House of Commons, in the future Resolutions of all Public Meetings, we hope

“ that an immediate attention to the enormous debts still due to the public by certain noisy individuals will be strongly recommended.”—Before I proceed further with the narrative, it may not be amiss to notice here, the impudence of the assertion, that “ Lord Melville has not deprived the public of a single farthing ; and that his most implacable enemies have not dared to charge him with such an act.” In my opinion, and, I believe, in the opinion of most men, it has been clearly proved, that Lord Melville has *deprived the public* of immense sums of money. But, as to the latter part of the assertion, every one knows, every one knew, and this writer must, therefore, have known, that Lord Melville had been *charged*, over and over again, openly *charged*, at least, with having caused such deprivation.—The delicate allusion, in the last paragraph, is to the late Lord Holland, the father of Mr. Fox ; but, of that particular notice shall be taken hereafter.—Of the 2d paragraph, this writer informs us, Mr. Grey complained, in the House of Commons, on the same day it was published ; in consequence of which complaint Mr. STUART was, the next day called to the bar of the House, where, being asked by the Speaker what he had to say for himself, he read a paper as follows : “ Permit me, Sir, to assure you, that I very much regret that any part of the contents of my paper of yesterday should have incurred the displeasure of this Honourable House. If, Sir, I have expressed myself too warmly in favour of Lord Melville, for whom I shall *always entertain the highest respect and esteem*, I beg that this Honourable House will view it as the unguarded *language of the heart*, and not a wilful intention to provoke the censure of a power on which our dearest rights and liberties depend. I entreat you, Sir, that some allowance may be made for that freedom of discussion of public affairs which for a long series of years has been sanctioned by common usage ; and that the hasty composition of a newspaper may not be considered as a deliberate design to offend this Honourable House.” After the reading of this, which all those who know Mr. STUART will readily acquit him of having written, he was taken into the custody of the Serjeant at Arms, and there remained until the 2d inst. when upon the following petition being presented by Sir Hen. Mildmay, he was, after a reprimand from the Speaker, set at liberty. The petition, signed by Mr. STUART, was in these words : “ That for the publication of that part of his paper

“ of Thursday last, deemed highly offensive to this Honourable House, he feels the deepest regret ; and that although certain expressions in that paragraph be indiscreet and unguarded, and such as have incurred the displeasure of so important a branch of the British Constitution, yet that your petitioner humbly hopes, on this acknowledgment of his sincere sorrow, that this Honourable House, in the plenitude of its condescension and liberality, will be pleased to pardon him for a transgression solely attributable to the hasty composition of a newspaper, and not to any deliberate design of offending this Honourable House.—That your petitioner is emboldened to solicit your indulgence and forgiveness on his well-founded assurance, that during the several years in which he has conducted a newspaper, it has uniformly been his principle and pride zealously to support the character and dignity of the House of Commons ; and that it has frequently fallen to his lot to have vindicated both *from the charges of societies* expressly instituted to bring them into public disrepute and contempt.—That in any observations which your petitioner may have published on the conduct of Lord Melville, he could not but bear in mind, that the views of those societies, abetting domestic treason, and assisted by the co-operation of the revolutionary power of France, would, he verily believes, have effected the destruction of the British Constitution, had not the wise and efficient measures brought forward by that administration, in which Lord Melville held so conspicuous a situation, been adopted ; and *this Honourable House would not, in that case, perhaps, have been now in existence*, either to censure Lord Melville, or to pardon your petitioner.—That if any thing could increase your petitioner's regret, it would be its being supposed that the objectionable paragraph was directed also against the Right Honourable the Speaker of the House of Commons ; that your petitioner has no hesitation to declare, that no idea was ever more remote from his mind ; and that your petitioner would be the very last person to insinuate any thing disrespectful of a character whom he, in conjunction with the whole nation, highly esteems as a private gentleman, and most profoundly venerates as the head and public organ of this Honourable House.”—The reprimand was in the following terms :—“ PETER STUART—You have confessed you are the printer and publisher of the

" paper complained of in this House, as
 " containing libellous reflections on its cha-
 " racter and conduct, and this House hath
 " resolved that you were thereby guilty of
 " a breach of its privilege, and ordered you
 " to be taken into custody. By your peti-
 " tion to-day, you appear to have expressed
 " sorrow for your offence, and to have ac-
 " knowledged the justice of your punish-
 " ment; and thereupon this House, in its
 " lenity, hath ordered; that you be brought
 " to the bar to be reprimanded and dischar-
 " ged. I have, therefore, to reprimand and
 " admonish you, as a warning to others;
 " that this House doth and will resent it
 " as an high offence in any man who shall
 " presume to slander its character, or shall
 " endeavour to degrade it in the public esti-
 " mation. You are now reprimanded. I
 " have further to acquaint you, that you are
 " now discharged, paying your fees."—

In the same paper giving an account of this latter part of the transaction, Sir, it was that Mr. Stuart published, under your name, the threat against all the public prints in England, which threat has induced me to trouble you with this letter.

There are several topics which will naturally grow out of those started in the libel published by, and the petition presented in behalf of, Mr. Stuart. The "great satisfaction" which we are told the public must experience at the appointment and promotion of Sir Charles Middleton; "the party rancour and popular clamour," and the "unfairness and the presumption" of the House of Commons, in their "intemperate" proceedings, "directed and enforced by the violence of the times;" the "high respect and esteem" which the writer of the libel is resolved "always to entertain for Lord Melville:" these demand some remark. The share, too, which Lord Melville had in saving the country, and in preventing the utter annihilation of the House of Commons, during those sixteen years that he was constantly guilty of a gross violation of the law and a high breach of duty, will merit attention; and as to those Societies, of which Mr. Stuart speaks, in his petition, and to counteract the efforts of which he, it seems, so long and so successfully co-operated with Lord Melville; those Societies, "expressly instituted to bring into public disrepute and contempt both the character and dignity of the House of Commons;" as to those Societies, Sir, it will behove us, who are now so loudly threatened by the upstart writer in the Oracle, to inquire into the origin of those Societies; to point out the person,

and to quote the language of the first great agitator, he who taught the Corresponding Societies the principles upon which they proceeded, and whose having so taught them being proved to the satisfaction of the Judge and Jury produced the acquittal of the accused and arraigned members of those Societies. All these topics, Sir, it will become us to touch upon; and, if, as in the last-mentioned instance particularly, they tend to awaken a remembrance of what all of us might heartily wish to be for ever buried in oblivion; if they tend to revive party distinctions and political animosities, be the consequence on the heads of those liberal and judicious writers in the ORACLE, by whom they have been provoked.

At present, however, I shall confine myself to three points; but, before I proceed to the discussion of either, it is an act of justice due to Mr. Stuart, to declare, that I believe him, personally, to be perfectly innocent of the publications I complain of, a belief founded on the grounds I am now about to state.—Into the private concerns of Mr. Stuart I pry not; I ask for no support to my position from the rumours that are afloat relative to his professional or political connections, with respect to which I have only to observe, that those rumours, as far as they have reached me, represent him as connected with no person, with whom he is not, whether as to birth or dignity of mind, upon a footing of perfect equality. My opinion shall rest upon the evidence afforded me by the publications, which, only a few months ago, appeared in the columns, under his controul, relating to the very persons, who, through the same channel, are now assaulted with such unsparing and persevering malevolence.—The epoch, to which, Sir, I am desirous of recalling your attention, is the memorable one, at which, in an hour for his country and for himself inauspicious; Mr. Pitt re-grasped the reins of ministerial power, and at which the ORACLE was, in the confined sphere of its circulation, distinguished for the zeal with which it inculcated the wisdom and the necessity of including the members of the Opposition, particularly Mr. Fox, in the new arrangement, no less than for the ardour, the vehemence, with which it reprobated an union between Mr. Pitt and any of the persons composing Mr. Addington's ministry. In support of what is here stated, it will be necessary to quote the passages alluded to somewhat at length; because it is of great importance to show, that the sentiments now promulgated through the columns of the Oracle prove, either that Mr. Stuart is a man

completely destitute of all public principle, or, that he is not the author of the publications recently made in his paper. Speaking of the debate in the House of Lords of the 1st of May 1804, during which Lord Hawkesbury was said to have called the opposition a *faction*, the ORACLE says: "Were we sure our contemporaries would pass over this low and abusive term (as unbecoming in the Sec. of State to use as it was revolting to parliament to hear) in silence, we should never pollute our pages with its mention. Lord Grenville disdained to make any reply. Lord Spencer, with that dignity and manliness which must ever distinguish him, hurled back the foul reproach in the teeth of him who gave it, and left him, in the eyes of all, a sorry and discomfited railer." * So much for Lord Hawkesbury, who, for reasons that you, Sir, may, possibly, be able to point out, is *now* never mentioned in the ORACLE, but with that sort of respect, which his lordship may be entitled to expect at the hands of those, whose flippant impertinence he has had the generosity to overlook, or, rather, of whom he would not condescend to accept of atonement, because it was *atonement which they dared not refuse*.

—On the 8th of May, the day after it had been announced, that the King had sent to Mr. Pitt to form a ministry, the ORACLE thus expressed its joy: "The DOCTOR'S" (for, Sir, they did really call Mr. Addington, now Lord Viscount Sidmouth, the *Doctor*) "administration is no more; and on this we must heartily congratulate our country. We are no longer left for protection to the puny and pigmy efforts of the Addingtons, the Yorkes, the Hawkesburys, and the Castlereaghs, to men, who have, in no instance, exhibited one single mark of talent, one effort of firmness, or one ray of genius."†—The next day, however, this joy was turned into mourning. From what cause, think you, Sir? Why, an apprehension that Mr. Pitt, in consequence of an obstacle *imputed* to a personage to whom no wrong should ever have been imputed, was about to form a ministry from which Mr. Fox was to be excluded! So alarmed was the Editor at this but, let us hear his own words; words, which, if you have never read them *before*, I beseech you to read them with attention, bearing in your mind all the way, that they were published in the same paper, which contained the libel and petition inserted in the former part

* See Spirit of the Public Journals, p. 290.

† Ibid. p. 316. See the whole of these articles.

of this letter. "Mr. Pitt's representations" [to induce the King to admit Mr. Fox into the ministry] "on this subject are, unfortunately, supposed to have been ineffectual. The permission to communicate with Mr. Fox on this subject, is said to have been peremptorily and finally refused; and the *natural consequence* of this refusal is understood to have been, that part of the members of what has been called the New Opposition, have, on being invited to take a share in the arrangements now pending, expressed the utter impossibility of their acceding to such an exclusive system, after having openly pledged their opinions, both by their language and conduct, to the necessity of looking to the most comprehensive plan for a new administration. In this situation the business is now reported to rest; the rumours which were floating in the course of yesterday, pointed towards arrangements of a description so contracted, inadequate, and humiliating to the country, that we are unwilling even to detail them. Should they be realized, we shall think it our duty to call the attention of the public, in the most serious manner, to the shame and danger which the country must sustain, from seeing its first situations of trust still doomed to be filled by a succession of underlings, while the first talents of the country are proscribed and excluded; but we look with more satisfaction to the belief which generally prevailed in the course of the afternoon; that Mr. Pitt, disdaining to employ in such situations any of the members of the Doctor's administration, whose incapacity, both collectively and individually, was not ten days ago the object of his bitterest sarcasm, irony, and invective, and finding it hopeless to collect new recruits for so desperate an expedition, has thought it his duty to represent, in the highest quarter, this plain truth; that however desirous he may be to execute the wishes and obey the commands he has received, he finds it impossible any longer to contend against his own conviction, backed by the unanimous sense of a loyal, but a free and united people, and must therefore recur to the same proposition which he originally submitted, as indispensable in the present moment. It is with great satisfaction that we heard that the distinguished character, [Mr. Fox] whose exclusion from the new plan of administration has so much occupied the public attention, was desirous of removing any personal objections as to himself, by the most anxious solicitations to his friends, that they should furnish to the public the

"assistance of their talents, where no such
 "aid was permitted to be derived from his
 "acknowledged abilities and experience.
 "Their unanimous rejection of this propo-
 "sition must not only be considered as a tri-
 "bute of private friendship, but as a public
 "testimony of the sense they entertain of
 "the value of those services which he is so
 "well qualified to render to this country." *
 —This is, Sir, that very Mr. Fox, who is so
 delicately, and in such a manly style, alluded
 to in the 3d paragraph of the publication,
 for the 2d paragraph of which Mr. Stuart was
 reprimanded! On the 8th of May, 1804,
 the ORACLE, finding a report prevailing, that
 Mr. Pitt was actually engaged in patching up
 an "underling cabinet," burst forth in the
 following strain of indignation. "In this
 "situation, it seems universally allowed, that
 "no possible resource is left to Mr. Pitt for
 "the formation of his new government, un-
 "less he were content to take up with the
 "refuse of that administration which he has
 "succeeded in overthrowing, on the ground
 "of acknowledged misconduct and incapa-
 "city. His enemies, indeed, assert that he
 "is actually so employed. They even, at
 "this very moment, represent him as soli-
 "citing Lord Hawkesbury, Mr. Yorke, and
 "Lord Castlereagh, to retain the same offi-
 "ces for which he has publicly de-
 "clared them totally unfit; and to con-
 "tinue to administer, under his auspices,
 "those departments of government in which
 "their confusion, mismanagement, and
 "blunders have been exposed by him with
 "the severest invective, and the most poi-
 "gnant contempt and ridicule. To add to
 "this humiliation, it is even asserted that
 "these great statesmen have taken time to
 "deliberate, whether they should condescend
 "to accept of his invitation, and to hold
 "offices in his government!"† Yes,
 Sir, this was the language of the ORACLE!
 Of that very paper, which is now extolling
 the administration of Mr. Pitt, thus formed,
 even with the super-addition of "the Doc-
 "tor" himself! On the 11th of May, in-
 deed, after having profited from sleep, or,
 perhaps, from something more potent, the
 Editor of the Oracle did appear to have be-
 gun to change his opinion. He descanted
 largely on the wisdom, talents, and public
 spirit of Mr. Fox; but, could not help re-
 gretting, that the friends of that gentleman
 had persisted in their refusal to come into the
 cabinet without him, though, observe, they

had, only the day before, been highly com-
 mended and extolled for such refusal! A de-
 claration was, however, made, which it is
 necessary to keep constantly in mind, and
 which is peculiarly proper to be stated upon
 this occasion. The writer seemed to be fully
 impressed with the disadvantageous and suspi-
 cious light, in which the conduct of Mr. Pitt
 appeared to the public, and was, therefore,
 anxious to inculcate the belief of that gen-
 tleman's having had no share in excluding
 Mr. Fox from the ministry. "We do not,"
 says he, "pretend to state all that has passed
 "in the several written communications and
 "personal interviews which Mr. Pitt has
 "had with his Majesty upon this subject;
 "but from the superior sources of informa-
 "tion which we possess, we have no hesita-
 "tion in assuring the public, that every pos-
 "sible exertion was made, both in the one
 "and in the other, to induce his Majesty to
 "confer on Mr. Fox a place of the highest
 "trust and importance in the new cabinet;
 "and that Mr. Pitt persisted in his endea-
 "vours for the attainment of this desirable
 "object till the royal negative was given in
 "such a manner as left neither room for,
 "nor hope of, success by any further per-
 "severance. We shall not presume to sur-
 "mise the grounds on which his Majesty was
 "induced to exercise this, the undoubted
 "prerogative of his crown, however much
 "we may regret the use that has been made
 "of it in this instance; it is a subject upon
 "which our respect for the constitution,
 "and our loyalty for the King, equally pre-
 "clude all discussion."—Yet, Sir, this
 same print it is, which is now going back even
 to Mr. Fox's infancy to find out grounds for
 justifying, not only his exclusion from the
 cabinet, but from every thing wherein the
 interests of the nation are concerned! This
 same print it is, which, in the form of both
 paragraphs and speeches, is now endeavour-
 ing to represent Mr. Fox as a person totally
 unworthy of being listened to upon any sub-
 ject connected with a charge of corruption;
 though, it is well known, that, since the
 above quoted articles were written, Mr. Fox's
 opposition has been against that ministry, of
 the very elements of which, the writer in
 the ORACLE expressed his decided hostility!
 Can we then believe, Sir, that the recent
 publications in the ORACLE have pro-
 ceeded from the same pen, whence pro-
 ceeded those which I have just submit-
 ted to your perusal? I sincerely acquit
 Mr. Stuart of the imputation. I cannot
 consent to the imputing to him conduct,
 to express an adequate degree of abhorrence
 of which no language can afford words. No,
 Sir; it cannot have been Mr. Stuart. With

* Spirit of the Public Journals, p. 325.

† Ibid, p. 332. The whole of these articles
 should be read now; as also those of about
 the same date in other prints.

him the recent attempts to awaken party animosities, have not, I am convinced, originated; because I can discover no motive which *he* could have for furbishing up the old story of *Lord Holland and unaccounted millions* other than that of dividing the public attention, of diverting, for a moment, a portion of that attention from the conduct of Lord Melville and Mr. Pitt; and, at the same time, to throw some degree of odium on the name, at least, of Mr. Fox, that Mr. Fox, whom he so recently and so highly praised, and at not seeing whom in the cabinet he expressed his regret; a motive which it would be monstrous to impute to him. No: the insinuations in the 3d paragraph of the libel and in the body of the petition proceeded, I am fully persuaded, neither from the pen nor the mind of Mr. Stuart; but from those of some envious and venomous upstart, who, perhaps, in his haste to attain the summit of that power, of which his foot never ought to have touched the first step, would, had he capacity equal to his will, sting where he cannot betray, and degrade where he cannot destroy, every one whom he regards as an obstacle to the accomplishment of his presumptuous and insolent desires. "Curst 'cows," however, according to the old saying, "have short horns;" and thus it has appeared in the present case, where the attempt to wound has injured nobody but the assailant and his friends. Miserable is the man, or the party, driven to accept of the support of an upstart, and happy all those who are the objects of his malice; for, of such creatures,

"It is the *slaver* kills, and not the *bite*."

Read the history of the those princes and ministers; whose career has terminated in disgrace, and say how few of them have not owed their downfall to some political being of their own creation; to some upstart, whom, in the luxury of their power, in a refinement in their contempt for the habits, opinions, and feelings of mankind, they have invested with authority, which, in such hands, has finally become insupportable to any but the basest of minds. Of all the symptoms of political decline the prominence of upstarts is the surest. It is not till the crown of the oak is blasted, till his heart is rotten, till his roots are loosened, till he rocks with every wind, till he trembles even at the zephyr, that the fungus shoots up from his stem.

Having thus stated the reasons, which induce me to believe, that Mr. Stuart ought not to be regarded as the author of the publications in question, I shall now, Sir, proceed to describe the three points, which, in the present letter, it is my intention to dis-

cuss. 1. The case of the late LORD HOLLAND, as compared with that of LORD MELVILLE.—2. The nature and tendency of the libel published in the Oracle of the 26th ultimo, compared with publications in general, touching upon the proceedings in Parliament.—3. The injudiciousness of the writer, in selecting *your* name, under which to publish a threat against the editors of public papers, and that of *Sir Henry Mildmay*, under which to make a sort of protest against an alleged attempt to abridge the liberty of the press as to parliamentary proceedings; which point will naturally extend to an inquiry into the example afforded us by that weekly newspaper of which you were the principal conductor, and also to the relation of an occurrence which will tend to show whether the writer in the Oracle has truly represented the real disposition of Sir Henry Mildmay, and which occurrence, though quite of a public nature, is known to very few persons except that gentleman and myself.

FIRST; let us suppose, for a moment, that the case of Lord Holland, the father of Mr. Fox, had borne an exact resemblance, in all its parts, to the case of Lord Melville, instead, as will be found to be the case, of resembling it in no one particular. Let us suppose this; what has Mr. Fox to do with the matter? Ought he to be reproached with his father's misconduct? Ought he, supposing his father to have been guilty of a gross violation of the law and a high breach of duty, to be reviled because he is endeavouring to cause a similar offence to be punished in another man? Whither, Sir, would such a principle lead us? Most assuredly to the exclusion from public authority of every one whose ancestors (for there is no knowing when to stop) have been guilty of such offences against the public; for, if a person so descended has no right, if it be unjust or indecorous in him, to use his utmost endeavours to bring peculators to punishment, he certainly ought never to be placed in any post of public trust. The upstart writer has, therefore, only to persuade us to adopt this principle and *the way will soon be cleared before him*; for scarcely a man will be found eligible to power, except he has sprung from ancestors who had the good fortune never to be known, even perhaps, to their own children. This sweeping principle, however we shall not, at the modest suggestion of this upstart, adopt. In giving us a picture of injustice calculated to make a deep impression of abhorrence on our minds, the moralist has represented a ferocious beast, resolved to devour his neighbour but having

no good ground of complaint against him, and receiving from him an assurance of his innocence, exclaiming, "that's nothing to me: if it was not you, it was your father." But, Sir, where is the man amongst us, however low and obscure his origin, who would be willing to be made answerable for the faults of his ancestors? I should not, for those of mine. Would you, Sir, for the faults of yours? And, if we, whose ancestors had the good fortune to live in "a snug privacy," as Bobadil calls it; if we should think it hard to be called to account for their faults, what, if this retrospective censorship were established, would be the lot of those, the deeds of whose progenitors, for centuries past, have been carefully recorded? What, for instance, if, upon reading the petition of Mr. Stuart, boasting of his joint labours with Lord Melville in the cause of *loyalty*; what, if upon reading this petition, and seeing the writer state, that it was presented by Sir Henry Mildmay, some one were to exclaim, what! Sir Henry Mildmay the friend of *loyalty*! Sir Henry Mildmay, the descendant of a family having in it the most infamous of all the English *regicides*! He a friend to *loyalty*, who bears the names, of the man, of whom Clarendon says, that "he had been loaded with so great favours and bounties by King James and by his Majesty (King Charles I.) that he was raised by them to great estate, that no man was more obsequious to the court than he whilst it flourished, being a great flatterer of all persons in authority, and a spie in all places for them, and yet who, from the beginning of the parliament, concurred with those most violent against the court, and, at last, became one of the murderers of his master;" of the man whom his biographer says, "the parliament received with the same sensations as the Turks receive a renegado Christian;" of the man whom Noble, in his *Lives of the Regicides*, observes, that "shame and he had long separated, that he rather courted than shunned infamy, that of all those who sat in judgment upon the King, Sir John D'Anvers and Sir Henry Mildmay were the only two personally known to his Majesty, and that, therefore, we may easily credit what has been stated by Clarendon, that the party of miscreants, their fellow Commissioners, looked upon no two men in the kingdom with such scorn and detestation as they did upon D'Anvers and Mildmay!" If, any one, upon reading in the Oracle, that Sir Henry Mildmay presented and eulogized the petition of Mr. Stu-

art, boasting of his *loyalty*, had, in the above manner burst forth with regard to the family of the worthy Baronet, what would have been the feelings of the public? Would they not have been the feelings of astonishment and scorn at a mode of attack so novel, so foul, and so audibly expressive of the badness of the cause, as well as of the meanness and malignity of the assailant? And, if, in such case, these would have been their feelings, who shall express the contempt, which they now do, and which they ought to, entertain towards all those, who have resorted to similar means of assailing Mr. Fox?—Thus far, Sir, I have proceeded upon the supposition of a perfect *similarity* in the case of Lord Holland and that of Lord Melville; and, if, under that view of the matter, we can find no justification for those who have now revived the case of the former for the evident and avowed purpose of thwarting and checking his son in his laudable endeavours to bring Lord Melville to justice; if, even under that view of the matter, we are, upon every principle of honour and justice, called on to condemn the conduct of those persons, what will they merit at our hands, when it shall appear, as, from what is about to be stated, I am satisfied it will, that there is *no similarity* in the cases, and that, in the case of Lord Holland, the fault was not in the *man*, but altogether in the *office*, while, in the case of Lord Melville, we well know, that the fault was not in the office, but *altogether in the man*? But, Sir, before we enter on this statement, in which I shall be compelled to be very brief, it is not unnecessary to observe, that that part of Mr. Stuart's publication, which relates to Lord Holland and to Mr. Fox, I mean the 3d and last paragraph, *was not included in the subject of Mr. Grey's complaint*. Mr. Fox appears to have been willing to leave it to the contempt of the public; and, I must request you to recollect, that, according to a statement in the Oracle of the 26th, this 3d paragraph never would have been read to the House had not the reading of it been moved for, as the Oracle tells us, by Mr. Robert Ward, an under Secretary of State. Mr. Fox, after the paragraph had been read, very pertinently asked, whether the gentlemen on the opposite side regarded this attack upon him personally, as a *palliation* of the foregoing attack upon the House. Mr. Ward, one would think, could hardly have viewed it in that light; Mr. Ward, who, though in a pamphlet the matter of which was stale and diluted while its manner was excessively dull, had spoken in terms the most contemptuous of Mr. Addington's ministry, comprizing almost all

that cabinet to which Mr. Fox is now opposed; Mr. Ward, who, in the same pamphlet, had treated with indignation the assertion of the Addington writers, that Mr. Fox was fit to be "a French prefect of a British Republic, and not the minister of a British King;" Mr. Ward, who, in recommending an union of the great public character and talents of the country, thus expressed his regret at not seeing it likely immediately to take place: "We are gamesters of a most dangerous, a most dreadful order: our play is for neither more nor less than the existence of Britain, and the King's crown. Could wishes decide there should be an *end of party*. All the opposing benches in the House of Commons present abilities that might yet *save the nation*. Can any one refuse to say, that Mr. Fox's mind is of the very first class? It is *dreadful* to think, that the whole of this ability is *excluded from the cabinet*!" I think, Sir, it will be allowed, that the malice of the writer in the Oracle got the better of his prudence, when he represented this same Mr. Ward as anxious to feast his ears with the repetition, in open Parliament, of a paragraph evidently intended, though quite uselessly employed, to wound the feelings and to degrade the character of Mr. Fox.—Coming now to a comparison between the case of the late Lord Holland and that of Lord Melville, we must first observe, that Lord Holland was Paymaster of the Forces at a time when the regulations, and the very constitution of that office, not only permitted large balances of the public money to be kept in the hands of the Paymaster, but rendered it almost impossible that he should not hold such balances. The money, issued from the Exchequer for the service of the army, was issued directly to the Paymaster, who, therefore, was, in that respect, a great banker of government, keeping the money in his hands, compelled, indeed, to keep it in his hands, till it was called for in payment of the army services. It has been thought by some, that while it remained in his hands, he ought not to have made use of it; but others have thought, and still think, that he had a legal right to make use of it; and, indeed, the *legality of the practice seems to have been recognized by Parliament*, when they, at the recommendation of the Commissioners of Accounts, granted an addition to the fixed salary of the Paymaster, in lieu of all other perquisites, emoluments and profits whatever, amongst which was expressly included the emolument arising from the use theretofore made of the balances of the public money in his hands. It will be remembered, that the Paymaster's

Office and that of the Treasurer of the Navy, were, at the time I am speaking of, and, indeed, till the year 1782, upon nearly the same footing. Upon looking back into the reports and accounts, laid, at different times, within these last twenty years before Parliament, we find that the practice of using the public money, while in the hands of the Paymaster of the Army and the Treasurer of the Navy, was universal, as well as the practice of keeping, for many years, an account open with each Paymaster and Treasurer, *after he had quitted his office*. He or (in case of his death) his representative, was obliged to settle all the accounts he had opened; and, to those who take but a moment to reflect on the multiplicity of the accounts he was obliged to open; on the difficulty of settling with the accountants in the colonies, and with the executors or representatives of others; to such persons it will not appear surprizing, that every Paymaster as well as Treasurer left his public accounts to be settled by the succeeding generation. To hear the venomous writer in the Oracle, Sir, one would imagine, that the accounts of no other Paymaster than Lord Holland ever were in a situation similar to his; but, if we look into the financial statements laid before Parliament, we find, that the executors of Mr. Rigby are still paying in part of his balance as Ex-Paymaster of the Forces; that the Executor of Lady Greenwich, Executrix of the Rt. Hon. Charles Townsend, is paying in part of that gentleman's balance as Ex-Paymaster of the Forces; and, in the returns of no older a date than 1799, we find the representatives of the Rt. Hon. George Grenville (the father, I believe, of the Marquis of Buckingham, &c. &c.) paying in money on his account as Ex-Treasurer of the Navy. The fault was, as I said before, in the *office*, and not in the *man*. The office was constituted at a time when the expenditure was a mere trifle, compared to what it had grown to during the official period of Lord Holland. Bank paper, and all the operations connected therewith had increased tenfold before he quitted the office; and, the many discussions and inquiries relative to the subject only tended to demonstrate, that, to have avoided the embarrassments and defalcations, in which he was involved, would have required powers of prevention more than have ever yet fallen to the lot of any human being. At last, the evil could be endured no longer; it was found upon repeated trials, that no degree of vigilance and punctuality in the officer could prevent its continuation as long as the vices of the office continued. These vices were, therefore, removed: the constitution of the



offices of the Paymaster of the Forces and of the Treasurer of the Navy was abrogated: another was formed for each: that for the Army Pay-Office was formed in 1782 by Mr. Burke, then Paymaster, and that of the Navy Pay-Office in 1785, by Mr. Dundas, then Treasurer of the Navy. In the former, the new constitution was rendered efficient by the integrity of the officer; in the latter, it was rendered completely inefficient by that gross violation of the law and high breach of duty, of which Mr. Dundas was guilty for sixteen years, and for which he has now been censured and disgraced.—

What similarity, therefore, Sir; what similarity in any one point, is there in the case of Lord Holland and that of Lord Melville? And, what, then, are we to think, where are we to look for words adequate to express our contempt, of the conduct of those, who have now been, not only propagating the notion of such a similarity, but urging it as a ground whereon to charge *the son* of the former with *injustice*, because he has demanded, in the name of his injured constituents, punishment upon the head of the latter?

The length, to which this letter has unexpectedly extended, prevents me from entering, at present, on the other proposed points, which, therefore, must be postponed till my next.—In the mean time, I am, Sir, yours, &c. &c. WM. COBBETT.

May 7th, 1805.

REFORM OF FINANCIAL ABUSES.

LETTER III.

SIR,—I have pointed out, in my two former letters, the necessity and the practicability of keeping and stating the public accounts in the same manner that is adopted by all persons in trade. I have briefly set forth, that the whole business of receiving the national income should be comprised in the assessment, collection, receipt and payment of it into the Exchequer. The reasons upon which the preparatory measure of assessment in every instance appears requisite, I mentioned in my last letter; but, since writing it, a further reason has occurred, viz. the opportunity it affords the subject of appeal, in case of unjust conduct on the part of the assessor. The tyranny of taxation is certainly the greatest evil that attends it. It is no great sacrifice for a person, who can contemplate the blessings of the British constitution, to contribute even very largely to its defence; but, to be exposed to the vexatious domineering of a tax-gatherer, where he oversteps the bounds of his duty; is to become subject to the worst evils of a state of slavery. By making the first step of collecting taxes, the assessment of what is to be paid, and giving

the person assessed the opportunity of obtaining redress, and making the assessors accountable for their conduct, a vast deal of existing oppression would be put an end to. It is necessary, before I quit the subject of the receipt of the revenue, to notice the propriety of each department being superintended by commissioners. This principle appears, upon looking into the practice of the revenue, to have been in some instances carried too far, and in one to have been entirely neglected. Commissioners have been appointed for each distinct department of the Salt Office, the Hawkers' and Pedlars' Office, and the Hackney Coach Office, when one would have been sufficient; and while the whole revenue of the Post Office has been committed to the charge of two Postmasters General. In both cases the recommendation of the Committee of Finance have been neglected. They recommend the Salt Duties to be placed under the management of the Excise Office, (9th Rep. p. 5) and the business of the Hawkers and Pedlars Office, and the granting of Licences for Hackney Coaches to be transacted by the Stamp Office. (10 Rep. p. 4, and 11 Rep. p. 4.) They also say, in regard to the Post Office. "It may be worthy of consideration, whether a Board of Commissioners upon the plan on which other revenue departments are conducted, would not secure the most effectual attention to the rapid and complicated business of this office." (7. Rep. p. 31.) These are circumstances at this period, particularly deserving of the attention of Parliament, as it must be presumed, that the Committee did not adopt these sentiments, without having found in the course of their investigations, very sufficient reasons for forming them. But the circumstance of all others the most to be attended to, and that which I wish most particularly to impress upon your readers, is the total abandonment of the present practice of reducing every officer employed in the receipt of the revenue, at the same time a paymaster of it. If responsibility attaches to the duty of receiving, it attaches in a tenfold proportion to the duty of paying; and, therefore, this latter duty should be placed in other distinct hands, and the control be proportionably greater. In the one instance, the person who pays, checks the conduct of the officer that receives, because he will always be a ready witness to declare the truth; in the other, the person paid being a participator in the fraud, whenever any is committed, will leave the public officer at liberty to commit it, so far as his evidence may be calculated upon as likely to appear against him. But, further, it is impossible, so long as collectors and receivers are paymasters, that they can be pro-

vented from keeping large balances in their hands; some balances are actually necessary to enable them to pay for whatever they are liable to be called upon; and this necessity will always be pleaded as an excuse for keeping very large balances to be applied to their private emolument, whilst the public are deprived of the benefit of their own money. Besides these reasons, it must be very obvious to every person the least acquainted with the receipt and expenditure of large sums of money, that whenever a receiver is empowered to make payments for expenses incurred by himself, expenses similar to the incidental expenses in the revenue, that he will be very profuse, and his disbursements be very great. Take even the account of a valet de chambre. If this gentleman is left to himself and experiences no difficulty in passing his accounts, even on the supposition that they are perfectly correct, and that every thing purchased is forthcoming; the money expended will amount to a much greater sum, than that which would have been sufficient to purchase all the necessities of his master, had his master taken the trouble upon himself of transacting his own business. The natural inclination of every one to expend money, when they have it in their possession, is continually operating to stimulate the invective powers of the holder of it to find new objects of purchase; and, besides this pleasure of buying, there is the further gratification, which operates upon petty public officers of incurring the obligations of those they employ by giving them the benefit of the employment. It therefore happens, even where public officers are perfectly honest, that the optionary power of expending the public money in the incidents belonging to their department, induces a much greater expense to the public, than is necessary to be incurred, or than would be incurred if the expenditure and payment were under the direction of a distinct officer. Many objections will, no doubt, be started against this plan of enforcing the payment of ALL the public income into the Exchequer, previous to the expenditure of one farthing of it upon any object whatsoever. It, however, appears to me, that every species of objection may be reducible under two heads, first the inconvenience; and, secondly, the additional expense that would be incurred by adopting this plan. It will be said, "What, will you prevent the officer who collects the tax from deducting from the amount of his receipt, the salary that is due to him for his trouble; or, of the expenses which are unavoidable in executing the duties of his office? Will you adopt the circuitous and expensive method of send-

ing money from York to London, and from London to York, to pay the marching guineas of a regiment of militia from York, instead of adhering to the present method of having the payment made by the receiver general of the district? How inconvenient all this innovation will be; and how impolitic in times like these to add new burthens on the people, by employing new officers for the duties of paying the public money!" To the objection to the plan as being inconvenient, a sufficient answer may be given in a few words; namely, that individual convenience must always give way to the convenience and good of the public; and, whether it should in this instance give way, will be determinable by the result of the consideration of the plan, as one calculated to promote the public good. This consideration involves the objection of additional expense; and, therefore, the inferences that may be drawn from it will fully decide the merits of both objections.—In the first, to proceed regularly with the discussion of these objections, it is proper to state those which exist against the method now in use. These are an immense optionary expenditure of the public money, by the public officers in the collection and receiving of it, not subject to an efficient control; the necessity of large balances being permitted to remain in their hands; and great confusion, and consequently, the opportunity of committing great fraud, in the revenue accounts. If then, these evils could be prevented by enforcing the payment of all the public income into the Exchequer, would or would not the public be a gainer by the transaction, even if the new system of making payments was attended with some additional expense? The answer is perfectly obvious. [This expense would be attended with a profit to the public beyond calculation. For, who can estimate what the public now loses by the uncontrolled profusion of its officers; the immense sum of balances; and the extent of fraud which may be presumed to exist in every department? Without, therefore, any reference to particular facts, or any laboured argument, it may with safety be inferred, that the public good would be vastly advanced by the adoption of the division of the duties of receiving and paying the public money; and that the objections of inconvenience and additional expense are by no means tenable.—Before I conclude, I beg to offer a few additional observations upon the receipt of the revenue. As this portion of the public business has engaged the particular attention of the Committee of finance, it has arrived at a degree of perfection not to be found in any other branch. The institution

of commissioners has been attended with the best effects, and nothing appears to be wanting, but the adoption of the several recommendations contained in the reports of the committee, and an active fulfilment of duty on the part of the Treasury Board. It is certainly a very ungrateful requital of the labours of the committee, to leave their reports as mere waste paper on the shelves of the House of Commons; and it is treating the public very unfairly to have held out the prospect, and encouraged the expectations of reform in the year 1796, and to neglect those measures which are sanctioned by the public declaration of the committee, of their being adapted to improve the collection of the revenue, and to curtail the expenses of the nation. If it has been found expedient to appoint a commission to report upon the substance of the reports of the Commissioners of Naval Inquiry, why would it not be equally expedient to appoint a similar commission or a committee of the House of Commons, to report upon the recommendations of the Committee of Finance; and to state to Parliament those of them which have been adopted, and those which have been passed by; and their opinions as to their being applicable to existing circumstances? These reports reflect great honour to the committee, and may be rendered of great service to the public. I trust, therefore, Mr. Cobbett, that the public attention may not be led away from abuses of which there is positive proof, by the novelty of looking after others, perhaps, of very inferior importance. In my next, I shall lay before you a plan for conducting the whole expenditure of the nation—I am, &c.—*VERAX.*—*April 29, 1805.*

DOMESTIC OFFICIAL PAPERS.

PETITIONS, &c. AGAINST LORD MELVILLE.

—Address presented to the King, upon the Throne, by the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council of London, on the 30th of April, 1805.

We your Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Commons of the City of London, in Common Council assembled, beg leave, with every sentiment of duty and devotion to your Majesty's person and government, to approach your Majesty with our sincere congratulations on the discoveries which have been made by the Reports of the Commissioners of Naval Inquiry, laid before your Majesty and the other branches of the legislature; from which your Majesty must have seen with astonishment and indignation that an eminent member of your Majesty's go-

vernment, the Lord Viscount Melville, had been guilty of practices which the representatives of the people, in Parliament assembled, have declared to be a gross violation of the law and a high breach of duty.—We are persuaded that your Majesty's royal mind feels it to be a great aggravation of Lord Melville's palpable, conscious and deliberate breach of a statute, which he beyond all others was bound to observe with strict fidelity, that he had filled so many and such high offices in executive government, and was honoured with so large a portion of your Majesty's confidence.—The virtues which adorn your Majesty and which excite in the highest degree the love of your people, are a pledge to the nation that in removing Lord Melville from your Majesty's councils and presence for ever, the punishment of a delinquent, however just, is far less a motive with your Majesty than the example held out, that no minister, however favoured, shall presume upon your Majesty's countenance, who shall be found to have trampled upon the law and to have disgraced the functions with which he had been invested.—The investigations of the Commissioners of Naval Inquiry have excited the interest, and inspired the country with gratitude towards those commissioners, and we are persuaded that your Majesty participates in the general anxiety which pervades all ranks for the prolongation, and if necessary, for the enlargement of their authority.—Confiding in your Majesty's paternal solicitude, that whatever is cheerfully contributed by a loyal people shall be faithfully administered, we entertain the fullest assurance that to your Majesty it will be a source of the profoundest satisfaction, that all necessary measures shall be adopted and persevered in towards the correction and punishment of proved malversation, and that nothing will be omitted which shall have a tendency to promote the public confidence in government, and to invigorate and confirm the spirit, energy, and union, of your Majesty's empire at this important crisis.

His Majesty's Answer.

I am fully sensible of your loyalty and attachment to my person and government; you may rely on my concurrence in every measure which is calculated to maintain the credit of the country, and to remedy any abuses which may be found to exist in the public expenditure.

PETITION AGAINST LORD MELVILLE presented to the House of Commons, on the 3d of May, 1805, from the Electors of the City of Westminster.

Your petitioners share the national gra-

tribute to your honourable House, for your memorable and virtuous votes of the 8th and 10th days of April last, founded upon the Tenth Report of the Commissioners of Naval Inquiry, declaring the Lord Viscount Melville to be guilty of a gross violation of the law and a high breach of public duty.—Never were Parliamentary measures received with more exultation by the country than the said votes; and nothing, your petitioners are persuaded, could cause more disappointment to the nation than your hon. House's stopping short of these great ends of justice, which the public interest demands, and the honour you have acquired by the said votes exacts and enforces at your hands.—The pure, the moderate, the faithful, the independent and the dignified discharge of the functions with which the law has invested the said Commissioners of Naval Inquiry has filled the country with the most unqualified admiration of their conduct. The renewal of their authority is a source of the most unfeigned pleasure to the people at large; and we do most earnestly supplicate your honourable House, that in the construction of the new statute, your attention will be fixed upon the contumacious obstruction to full inquiry, which is so clearly pointed out in the said Tenth Report; and that you will carefully guard against its repetition.—Your petitioners beg leave to state to your honourable House, that a civil suit against Viscount Melville and Mr. Trotter, unaccompanied by criminal prosecution, would be infinitely short of the public hopes, because it is so of public justice. It is not the refunding of money, that, of itself, is of real consequence to the nation; it is the infliction of an exemplary vengeance upon proved and powerful delinquents. It is the manifestation to the whole world that high criminals are not above the reach of punishment; and that the corrupt or wanton violators of law shall feel the strength of its arm.—Above all things we intreat your honourable House not to permit the public feeling to be sported with; and, in the formation of inquiries similar to the Naval Commission, that you will take care that the power constituted be equal to its professed objects; both as relating to the vigour of the authority, and to the integrity of those who are to put it in execution; for we submit to your honourable House whether, if any thing can be worse than a deep-rooted, wide-spreading system of abuse and peculation in the management of public money, it would not be the institution of a system of revision, in its nature a burlesque upon investigation, and in its result a mockery of justice.—To all these points, we beg the best attention of your honourable House.

We beseech you to pursue with effect what you began with so much honour. We intreat you not to relax in your efforts till you have brought Viscount Melville to condign punishment, and given to all who shall be found to have committed similar crimes, a signal demonstration that, in the representatives of the people, instead of abettors of their iniquities, they will find only the faithful guardians of the nation, and the zealous vindicators of the laws.—And by so doing your petitioners will ever pray.

PETITION AGAINST LORD MELVILLE presented to the House of Commons on the 25th of April, 1805, from the Electors of the Borough of Southwark.

We, the undersigned electors of the Borough of Southwark in the County of Surrey, beg leave to congratulate your honourable House upon the result, so glorious to the character of Parliament, of the discussions which have taken place in your honourable House, on the 8th and 10th days of this instant (April) respecting the gross malversations in certain branches of the Executive Government, which have been disclosed in the Tenth Report of the Commissioners of Naval Inquiry.—We pray your honourable House to follow up that virtuous line of conduct, which, upon the two days before named, have diffused such signal satisfaction through the whole country.—We intreat you to sift to the bottom the mass of abuses which the aforesaid Commissioners have traced and exposed.—We beseech you to renew, without loss of time, and to extend, if necessary, the powers so faithfully executed of those Commissioners.—We implore your honourable House to pull down guilt however protected; to save from rapacity, from peculation, and fraud, a people who contribute cheerfully to the real wants of the state, and who never complain but when their generous temper is abused and imposed upon: so shall the Commons of England take the most efficient course possible to vindicate the sullied honour of the government; to confirm the public confidence; and to plant in all good hearts the most unfeigned admiration of the British Constitution.—And your petitioners will ever pray.

PETITION AGAINST LORD MELVILLE presented to the House of Commons on the 3d of May, 1805.

That the votes of your honourable House on the 8th and 10th days of April last, founded upon the Tenth Report of the Commissioners of Naval Inquiry, have inter-

rested the whole nation, and no part of the nation more deeply than your petitioners.—We humbly crave the liberty of stating, that no measures ever yet issued from the Commons of England which had diffused more gladness or raised more expectations than the said votes of April the 8th and 10th, declaring Lord Viscount Melville to be 'guilty of a gross violation of the law and a high breach of duty;' thereby supporting the upright and virtuous discharge of the salutary duties of the said Commissioners, whose conduct has excited the gratitude and the confidence of the whole country.—That the renewal of the said Commission is a subject of unfeigned joy to your petitioners; and that we entreat your honourable House to be careful to make the new law effectual, and adequate to its end. We pray your honourable House to attend particularly to those parts of the Tenth Report which have detailed the obstacles thrown by persons in office in the way of the investigation of the said Commissioners, and to guard against their repetition.—We submit to your honourable House whether the subaltern agents of corruption will not be eager to shelter their contumacy under the example of their superiors, unless the explicitness and enlarged authority of the law defeat their artifices. Nothing, we are persuaded, could be more revolting to the public sentiment, or could more thoroughly disappoint the hopes of the country than that, instead of inquiries real, honest, and efficient, a fallacious and illusory system should be allowed to be adopted, under which real guilt might elude detection, and the substance of earnest investigation be sacrificed to mere pretence and shew.—Your petitioners humbly beg leave to state to your honourable House, that a civil action against Viscount Melville and Mr. Trotter would not, of itself, be satisfactory to the public expectation. That a criminal prosecution against these delinquents is the real wish of the country; because the recovery of millions of money would not be of such real benefit to the people, as to see the justice of the law vindicated upon a great malefactor, with the same equal, impartial, and inflexible sternness, with which it falls upon the poorest and most unprotected criminal.—Your honourable House, by the said votes of the 8th and 10th of April, has extorted the admiration of those most hostile to the character and construction of the Lower House of Parliament. By following up the spirit of those votes, your honourable House will secure the confidence and the affection of the nation, and the triumph of the English Constitution will be complete.—We entreat you to proceed and finish your labours upon

these points in a manner that may be worthy of your honoured and applauded commencement of the same. We beg of you not to cease till you bring Viscount Melville to condign punishment; to expose delinquencies wherever traced, and to make an example of guilt in whatever quarter it may be proved.—And your petitioners will ever pray.

PETITION AGAINST LORD MELVILLE presented to the House of Commons on the 25th of April, 1805, from the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Livery of the City of London, in Common Hall assembled, setting forth

That the petitioners have uniformly concurred in and supported such measures as have appeared conducive to the safety and welfare of his Majesty's dominions, and have cheerfully submitted to the most unexampled burthens, under a confidence that the resources of the country were faithfully and honestly administered; and that they learn, with the utmost concern and astonishment, from the reports of the Commissioners for Naval Inquiry, now before the House, that the Right Honourable Henry Dundas, Viscount Melville, late Treasurer of his Majesty's Navy, has been guilty of a gross violation of the law and a high breach of duty, whereby immense sums of the public money have been perverted to private emolument: and that they conceive it to be a high aggravation of such offence, that these disgraceful transactions were carried on during a period of unprecedented difficulty, when the very existence of the country was said to be at stake; and that the person so abusing his trust, so violating the law, was in the enjoyment of several high and lucrative offices, and ever among the foremost in laying additional burthens upon the people, and calling upon them to submit to the most painful privations; and that they are duly impressed with a high sense of the virtue, integrity, and firmness of the House, and strongly participate in the sentiment which so generally pervades all ranks of his Majesty's faithful subjects, of the wisdom and fidelity with which it has discharged its most sacred trust, by the progress it has made towards protecting the people against such gross violations of the law and breaches of public duty; and that the petitioners approach the House, as the guardians of the liberties and property of the people, under a full conviction that such shameful abuses will induce the House to do ample justice to the outraged feelings of the country, by bringing to condign punishment convicted criminality; and that they beg to submit to the House, that it would be highly derogatory to his Majesty's government, pre-

judicial to the public service, and insulting to the House, and the nation at large, for Lord Melville any longer to continue in his Majesty's councils, or to hold any place of trust, profit, or honour, in or under the government; and that they conceive all other persons who may be implicated in, or have connived at, such abuses, to be incapable any longer of serving the country with honour or advantage, and ought equally to be brought to a severe account; and therefore praying, that the House, taking these matters into their serious consideration, will vigorously promote and prosecute those inquiries, and cause the powers of the said commissioners to be prolonged and extended, and other measures to be adopted, in order that such further inquiry may be made into the receipt, management, and expenditure of the public money, and the conduct of the public offices, as may lead to the detection of all abuses and the punishment of all offences, and that such a system of vigilance and economy may be established, as may effectually guard against the recurrence of such flagrant abuses.

PETITION AGAINST LORD MELVILLE presented to the House of Commons on the 25th of April, 1805, from the Mayor and Corporation of the City of Salisbury, setting forth

That the petitioners have perused, with much concern and interest, the resolutions of the House of the 8th and 10th days of this instant April, with concern, that any charges of the nature therein implied should attach upon any individual in high official situation, and with interest that the representatives of the nation have, under the circumstance of such charges, marked such individual with their censure and reprobation; and that the petitioners beg leave to state, that, in common with the nation at large, they have to lament the weight of the burdens to which the legislature has found it necessary to submit them, but they claim for themselves, in common with the nation at large, the merit of having borne them with patience, readiness, and equanimity, trusting that what had been granted liberally would be applied faithfully; but when a suspicion is gone forth, under the authority of parliamentary commissioners, and that suspicion apparently adopted by the House, that peculation has been hard at work, the petitioners take leave to call upon the national representatives for redress, reminding them that it is of little consequence as a public grievance, of little consequence in point of official morality, whether the actual peculation be by men of great authority and power, or by their deputies and subal-

terns under their permission and connivance; and therefore praying the House to continue such commission of inquiry as has already discovered such abuses, and to institute any new commission which may be necessary to ascertain whether in any other department of the state the national finances have been misapplied, and also to devise such legal proceedings upon those instances of misapplication already before the public as may satisfy the general cry for justice, by bringing all persons concerned to a strict responsibility.

SUMMARY OF POLITICS.

Many important subjects, which belonged to this head, have, during the last four or five weeks, been unavoidably omitted. I say unavoidably, because there was not time, and, in some instances, not room, to introduce them, without excluding part, at least, of that which has been inserted relative to the Tenth Report and matters connected therewith; and, which exclusion I could, in my own mind, have found nothing to justify, convinced as I have all along been, and as I still am, that, compared with the danger to be apprehended from an alienation of the people from the government, all other dangers, though some of them in themselves very great, are of trifling importance. To see the powers of the Continent, from whom co-operation was expected, shrinking from our touch; to see our West-India islands, submitting, one after another, to contributions demanded by an enemy, of whose maritime force the ministerial writers have constantly been speaking in terms of contempt; at this day to hear of the bustle of preparation to enable our admirals to face the combined fleets of France and Spain: either of these circumstances is sufficient to cause deep regret in the mind of any man attached to his country; but, neither of them, nor even all of them put together, is a thousandth part so much to be dreaded as the loss of the hearts of the people. To secure these the House of Commons has taken one important step; and, it is the duty of every man to make use of all the constitutional means in his power to induce them to pursue, to a satisfactory termination, the excellent work they have begun.

PROCEEDINGS AGAINST LORD MELVILLE. The history, somewhat disjointed indeed, of these proceedings was, in the foregoing sheet, p. 672, brought down to the 30th ultimo, when it was determined, in the House of Commons, to form a select committee, in the manner described in p. 670, to inquire, as far as related to the conduct of Lord Melville, into the circumstances respecting the diverting of the naval money

to other purposes, alleged by his lordship to be of a public nature. The Commons have, since the formation of the select committee, sent a message to the Lords, requesting that Lord Melville may be ordered to appear before the committee, the Lords have taken the request into consideration, and this paper will, probably, be printed before their decision be known.—In the mean time a very important and most satisfactory step has been taken by his Majesty, who has resolved to strike Lord Melville's name from the list of his Privy Council. The reader will remember, that the vote of censure having been passed on the 8th ultimo, Mr. Whitbread, upon the next meeting of the House, which took place on the 10th, was prepared to make a motion for an address to his Majesty to remove Lord Melville from his royal presence and councils for ever. Mr. Pitt objected to this; and, it was finally agreed, simply to lay the resolutions of the 8th before the King, leaving it to the ministers to advise his Majesty as to what further steps should be taken. This done, on the 11th, the House adjourned to the 25th. When it met again Mr. Whitbread inquired, whether his Majesty had been advised to dismiss Lord Melville from his councils, to which Mr. Pitt replied, that he had not; and, added, that, until he should be further instructed by the House, he should not think it right to advise his Majesty to command such dismissal. Whereupon Mr. Whitbread gave notice that he should, on a future day, make a motion for an address to His Majesty upon the subject; which motion was brought forward on the 6th instant. But, a debate and division were prevented by Mr. Pitt's stating, that, having *FOUND it to be the opinion of the majority of the House*, that Lord Melville should be dismissed from the Privy Council, he had advised His Majesty to dismiss him!—There will offer a future occasion to remark more circumstantially upon this part of the proceedings. At present I must beseech the reader's attention to some circumstances relating to *what remains to be done* with respect to Lord Melville; for, when we consider former punishments, whether of little or great delinquents, whether we consider the case of *HARLIN*, or of the Lords *Bacon* and *Macclesfield*, we must perceive that much yet remains to be done to satisfy the demands of justice, and to furnish a useful example. As to the grant of certain revenues recently obtained in the name of Lady Melville, Mr. Bond's declaration, without any comment, may suffice for the present; but, with respect to Lord Melville's annuity and his office and income as Keeper of the

Privy Seal in Scotland, some suggestions have been offered me, which should not, for a moment be suppressed.—In answer to a question, put by Mr. Fox, on the 6th instant, whether Lord Melville held any place of profit during the pleasure of the Crown, Mr. Pitt is said to have answered, “None but *for life*,” which is probably true, if the *Letter of the Grant* only is considered; for we know of none he continues to hold, but the annuity of 1,500*l.*, granted in July last, and the office of Keeper of the Privy Seal of Scotland.—But whether either of them can be considered as *legally* granted, and held for life, is a new and a curious question, which the rapacity of Lord Melville will probably cause to be agitated. An annuity, or pension, payable out of the King's private revenue, or the Civil List, is usually granted, I believe, during His Majesty's pleasure. Can the Sovereign go further, and, by his grant, charge that revenue for a period which may exceed his own life; or charge the revenue of his successors? That is one view; but what will be said, if it turns out, upon the investigation proposed by Lord Henry Petty, that this annuity of Lord Melville is charged on the public revenue of the country, without the authority of Parliament?—Again, as to the office of Keeper of the Privy Seal. Does it not sound somewhat odd, that the King should be advised to commit the custody of his seals to a person for life? What should we say, if the Privy Seal or the Great Seal of England were given in that way? The Privy Seal and Great Seal of Scotland are precisely analagous, though of less importance. Nor does the incongruity stop here. The grant of that office to Lord Melville is either illegal, or it must be maintained, that the King may, by law, commit the custody of the seals of his successor to any person he pleases; he may chuse the great officers of that successor. If that is unconstitutional; if common sense revolts at it, then the grant to Lord Melville, though it purports to be for his own life, can at the utmost, stand only during the life of the Sovereign who gave it.—Precedent may be resorted to. Will precedent support what is radically, essentially, and constitutionally bad? There is just one precedent in the case of Lord Melville's immediate predecessor. Lord Melville formerly held another of the King's Seals in Scotland, the Signet, a very lucrative office, now held by his Son, upon his resignation. That likewise was granted to him for life, contrary to all precedent, and in repugnance to the nature of the office. The Signet is, I believe, the Seal corresponding to that which the

Secretaries of State in England hold. The office of keepers of the Signet was accordingly attached to that of Secretary of State for Scotland, an office which subsisted till about the year 1745, when the name was dropped, but the keeper of the Signet is in fact the Secretary. Is it not monstrous to say a person may be appointed Secretary of the King for life; that the King renounces the power of changing his Secretary; and still more, that the King may name the Secretary of his successors?—These are some of the points, to which it is to be presumed Lord Henry Petty intends to call the attention of the House; and that they are well worthy of its attention, will not, I think, be denied by any one, who entertains a disinterested regard for the monarchy, and who considers how important it is, that the King should be afforded, upon occasions like the present, every fair opportunity of showing, that the Crown not less than the House of Commons is the guardian of the rights and interests of the people.

MR. PITT'S CASE. It will be remembered (see p. 670), that the principal object of the Select Committee of the House of Commons, now sitting, is to inquire into the conduct of Mr. Pitt, relative to three points; to wit; 1. the obtaining a writ of privy seal, whereby to excuse Lord Melville from paying the balance of 24,000*l.* due from him to the public, on account of Mr. Jellicoe's defalcation; 2. the knowledge which he had of certain sums of naval money having been drawn from the Bank of England contrary to law, and lent by Lord Melville to other branches of the public service; 3. whether, or not, Mr. Pitt was informed, or knew, that Messrs. Dundas and Trotter drew the naval money from the Bank of England and applied it to purposes of private advantage. —The reader must be aware of the gross impropriety of attempting to state, in point, what has come out before the Committee. As in the case of Lord Melville, however, the ministerial papers having begun their endeavours to anticipate the report of the Committee, and to prompt the public to a premature decision, I think it right just to point out these endeavours, and to caution my readers against the snare which this venal tribe is laying for their judgment. —Touching the transaction relating to the writ of privy seal, they have, as yet, said nothing. But, with regard to the second point, the knowledge which Mr. Pitt had of the withdrawing of certain sums of naval money from the Bank of England, contrary to law,

and lent by Lord Melville to other branches of the public service; with regard to this point, the ministerial paper, the COURIER, of the 8th instant, has the following curious remark: "From the examination of Mr. Pitt, and Mr. Long, before the Select Committee, it has, we understand, satisfactorily appeared, that the money advanced by the Treasurer of the Navy to the Board of Treasury, in 1796, was applied to the prevention of great public calamity; and, after averting the most perilous commercial distresses, was correctly repaid to the department from which it had been borrowed on this national exigency." —This paragraph, let it be observed, was inserted, word for word, in the other ministerial papers, the ORACLE, the SUN, and the MORNING HERALD; and, in the remaining paper of that description, the MORNING POST of the 9th, the persons, who are taking such uncommon pains to prepossess the public mind, and who may easily be guessed at, thought proper to venture to speak out a little plainer; as thus: "Mr. Pitt and Mr. Long have been twice examined before the Select Committee of the House of Commons, upon the subject of some temporary assistance afforded to the house of Boyd and Benfield, to enable them to make good an instalment of the Imperial Loan; a measure deemed necessary for the maintenance of the honour and credit of the country." —What! is this, then, the great public service? Was this the way, in which Mr. Pitt and Lord Melville saved the nation? Surely, this never can be true. What! Boyd and Benfield! The famous Messrs. Boyd and Benfield of the no less famous Messrs. Pitt and Dundas! Paul Benfield? Mr. Dundas's Paul Benfield? The Nabob of Arcot's Paul Benfield? Really, if this should prove to be the case; if it should prove that, in order to support Boyd and Benfield (for whose sake, be it remembered the Bank of England was thrown into the shade), sums, already raised upon the public, were lent to these loan-jobbers, in order to enable them to lend the public its own money, for which interest and a bonus were paid by that public to them; if this should be proved, it would be a libel indeed upon the House of Commons, it would be to impute corruption to the whole of the government, to insinuate that any of the persons concerned in such a crime, such a profligate defiance of the law, such a flagrant act of public robbery, would escape condign punishment. [The subject shall be revived in my next.]